

**DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION
STRATEGIC PLANNING
SUMMARY RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS
February 2, 2006**

[Note: Numbers in parentheses indicates the number of same or similar responses – there were 16 interviews done by phone, and one set of answers submitted in writing]

What short term challenges does DPC face?

Adequate and stable funding (competition for money in what is perceived by state agencies and others as a zero-sum game) (6)

Clarifying for ourselves and others the role and authority that DPC has, especially on land-use issues (4)

Preventing development in the primary zone (3)

Influencing development in the secondary zone to minimize impacts in the primary zone (3)

Get the levees fixed (3)

We're at a critical juncture – we either bulk up or go away (2)

Time spent trying to stay alive detracts from our ability to do anything meaningful toward accomplishing our mission (2)

Our continued existence

Get the infrastructure bond passed

The Sugar Mill in Yolo County while we have a chair and an Executive Director from Yolo County

Dealing with the role change proposals for DPC and CALFED

Balancing water politics in the state (North/South; Agriculture/Environmental tensions, etc.)

Inadequate water storage in the state and its impacts on the delta

Environmental impacts, especially ag run-off

Sufficient legislative and political support to continue

Better coordination with city / county land use planning

Prove that we can deliver our mission

Not having a solid plan

Our current mission seems too limited / rigid

Addressing the rights of property owners rather than allowing them to be steamrolled by government agencies

Escaping the bind that anything we do will tick off someone, especially in the primary zone

Ability to create a real buffer between the primary and secondary zones

Current ag practices in the delta are not sustainable – problematic to protect these practices over the long run

Authority of commission has not been tested

We have no real authority beyond writing a plan

Build a true consensus among the varied stakeholders

What long term challenges does DPC face?

Dealing with the impacts of water transport through the delta (including the re-emergence of a peripheral canal proposal) (9)

Increasing and competing demands on water for ag use, habitat, water transport, etc. (population growth and increasing stresses on the waterways, water supply and water quality) (4)

Agriculture in the delta will continue long into the future and will have many challenges – development, water supply, levee integrity, salinity, etc. (2)

Recreational value of the delta to a growing and diverse population (including differing languages and cultural assumptions) (2)

Levee integrity and flood protection (2)

Water quality (salinity / changing standards for potability) (2)

Having a partner such as a conservancy to protect the primary zone

Funding from secondary zone localities

We only have appeal authority – no proactivity – our authority may never get activated

Our ability to truly protect the primary zone from secondary zone developments (need a 1000 foot “zone of concern” over which we have increased authority)

Cross-loading barge traffic from Port of Oakland puts stress on drawbridges up and down the delta

Pressure from environmentalists who want more wetlands

Keep development to a minimum in both zones

A long-term plan for flood control above all else and regardless of stakeholder concerns (the water won't care)

Permanent protection for the primary zone – not year-to-year negotiations

Incursions into the secondary zone and our ability to influence and even veto these

Balance the needs of delta residents with everything else

South Delta Improvements Project

Use of wildlife easements

Doubling of the northern California population by 2050 and the increased demand for water and in-delta water storage

Decreasing pelagic organisms

Law enforcement (meth labs) / regulatory enforcement

What are DPC's unique strengths?

Diversity and skills of the commissioners (e.g., expertise / resource on water transport and levee infrastructure / state and local / sector diversity) (11)

Serve as a forum for stakeholders to share information and express concerns – we're the town square of the delta (8)

We're the single governmental agency that brings together most of the major players on behalf of the delta / keep the issues in front of others (6)

Ability to reach consensus (4)

Strong chairperson (2)

Watchdog role (including for CALFED) (2)

The fact that we're still here (2)

Provide the leadership to get consensus and advocate for a set of clear priorities (2)

Executive Director keeps the relationships with stakeholders in order (2)

Amazed that we get anything accomplished on such a small budget (2)

Primary zone appeal authority

We stay apolitical in an intensely political environment

Mediate from time to time

We do a lot of uncredited behind-the-scenes work to influence results with others

Our differences don't go away, but neither do they divide us

We're influencers, not gatekeepers

The commissioners are not just going through the motions

Jurisdiction on primary zone appeals – even if seldom used

We influence without threatening others

Haven't seen any – we're a toothless advisory group

What's missing that would make a difference?

Stable and adequate funding (including competitive salaries for staff) (10)

Enhanced jurisdiction / more power and authority (7)

Bring additional stakeholders onto DPC– (environmentalists, federal agencies, more local electeds) (7)

Bring additional land-owners onto DPC – conservancies and land trusts as well as individuals (3)

A clear vision of the future that balances competing needs and demands on the delta / a meaningful stand on the issues (3)

Need a technical staffer to do the reviews, help run forums, etc. (2)

Participation from the highest level of state agencies (vs. delegation to upper level managers) – just need all the political juice we can get (2)

We seem to be a sop from the legislature (2)

Becoming something like a Coastal Commission for the Delta is imperative (2)

A track record on enforcement / some credible output (2)

Don't mess with the Commission's composition – keep the environmentalists off

A statewide Water Manager / Ombudsman that stays apolitical through succeeding administrations (similar to the Legislative Analyst)

Protection for the very limited tax base in the primary zone public land acquisition decreases this)

Reclamation districts actually benefit from the increased tax base from development (e.g., water treatment plant on Empire Island)

Hold the electeds accountable to attend meetings or get someone else

Perhaps other stakeholders could serve in an advisory body

Not taking on City of Stockton for their incursions

We're heavily weighted to ag – need some transportation infrastructure expertise

A clear role that differs from other agencies

Some combination of easements and deed restrictions in the secondary zone

Respected as the go-to agency on the delta

The legislature's no-growth position on the delta is a limited view with narrow viewpoints – could bring in a C2HM Hill to promote economic development in tourism and recreation

Strategic focus on working with cities and counties to minimize impacts of development in the secondary zone

Nobody seems to get beyond their narrow view to see the big picture

Expanded debate and response to broader issues (e.g., rising sea levels)

The power to do projects (e.g., standardized signage, demonstration plantings for levee stabilization)

The state agency representatives may view their assignment as a burden – not take it seriously

New members may not be being oriented to their role by their predecessors, their bosses or the Commission staff

We don't always make clear to others what's at stake in the delta and why it's important to protect it

Sometimes we settle for the lowest common denominator instead of consensus

Ownership of the impacts of sending more water south, especially around the delta (vs. through it)

Additional Funding Sources:

Become a USDA-funded Resource, Conservation and Development Council or secure bond funding as a conservancy (similar to Tahoe Conservancy under Resources Agency) - either could solve some of our staffing and funding problems (2)

The cities and counties could contribute at least a token amount – but even this would be unstable (2)

The general fund (unlikely success, very unpredictable) (2)

Those who benefit most should pay the most – probably at the statewide level (2)

DWR's proposed Water Resource Investment Fund

Recreation is an untapped resource

Developer mitigation fees

State Department of Fish and Game – duck stamps, other licenses

We're supposed to receive money from fines occurring in the primary zone, but that doesn't happen

Each state agency could contribute a roughly equal share (Department of Boating and Waterways currently provides more than 50% of budget, with the balance from the Environmental License Plate Fund)

Also, the State agencies could contribute in-kind support

The reclamation districts are probably the least able to contribute additional monies

Not sure why we need the money yet, so wouldn't recommend more without a clear, agreed-upon objective

File a BCP (Budget Change Proposal) and move on if more funding is truly needed

What gets in the way that could be changed?

More focused and relevant meetings / more background at meetings (2)

Complaints from stakeholders that crowd the agenda / trivial or symbolic issues (2)

State agency employees can't / don't vote on political issues

Self-serving interests

Discussion of eliminating the Commission – it should be recognized as a necessary body

The state agencies slow things down sometimes, and may hinder activism

The Attorney General's opinion on what the Commission can and can't do

Maybe the state agencies could be non-voting participants

Requirement that we determine "any" impact rather than "significant" impact means we have less influence

What success factors should DPC focus on?

No development / minimal development in the primary zone (4)

Speaking as the voice for the delta / telling the delta's story of a delicate and perilous balance (4)

Having a strategic plan and then reporting on that so that everyone is on the same page (3)

Ag land preservation / champion property rights (2)

Back up our mission with adequate funding and staffing for the Commission (2)

Clear role and expectations for and from the Commissioners (2)

A well-thought-out promotion as a separate tourism region (similar to Tahoe or Monterey / Carmel) (2)

Go back to the legislature to get the authority and funding we need to get the mission accomplished (2)

Leverage our capacity as a forum (2)

Prove our value as distinct from others – CALFED and various state agencies with overlapping and competing missions – matched with an appropriate funding source

The attitude that the status quo is adequate to protect the delta – we need to be more proactive on threats

Focus on keeping large land parcels intact

Priorities on an island-by-island basis

Tap into the expertise of Commissioners and staff

A true vision for the future – not just a compromise

Deed restrictions in the primary zone and/or ag easements (may need incentives)

Consensus on what to do with levees

Outreach to local and regional groups

Bring the facts out instead of people's positions

Identify best practices for levee construction / maintenance (is there a resource on this?)

Long-term, stop playing second fiddle to CALFED

Assess impacts in the delta

Clear consensus among diverse stakeholders for the best course of action

Figure out how to redistribute dirt from excavations to where it could do some good in the delta

An alternative to dredging – if one exists – to improve levee integrity

Be a strong watchdog for all that occurs in the delta

Promote the delta as the linchpin that it is for agriculture in the nation

Other factors / comments:

Control of non-native plant species (e.g., water hyacinth) in the delta as a major influence on waterways and water transport

Department of Fish and Game is considering creation of a water policy unit

Farmers are getting better all the time as environmental managers

There's not enough money to maintain levee integrity (reclamation districts don't even get the 75% reimbursement for levee maintenance – they barely get 50%)

Legislative efforts should focus on funding levees, not use a levee bill as an excuse to fund other, unrelated projects

Four Things That Stand Out:

[Note: These are the conclusions and observations solely of the consultant and are not intended to represent the explicit comments of the interviewees.]

- 1.) There are four major strategic issues that emerge from these interviews:
 - the role and authority of DPC
 - securing a stable and adequate funding source
 - the composition of the Commission, and
 - appropriate staffing for current and future operations
- 2.) Although there are understandable and even necessary tensions in the group, DPC manages consensus well. Increasing the authority and/or composition of the Commission will likely upset this balance and may lead to wrangling and camps, at least in the short term. Nevertheless, the authority and composition of the Commission are very much at issue at this time, both from internal and external stakeholders.
- 3.) Staff and Commissioners have leveraged a very delimited set of responsibilities and official powers to the level of artful indirect influence on a wide array of complex issues in the Delta. Being satisfied and effective with a term of service on DPC means appreciating and applying that art.
- 4.) The only thing that keeps water from being the hottest of hot potatoes in California is that most of us take for granted an unending supply of potable water. DPC must do its work in the face of this assumption; but to elevate the concern is to elevate the politics, which may ultimately be counterproductive.